

# **Military Police Soldiers Share OIF/OEF Experiences With the Regiment**

*By Captain Heather Stone*

With military police Soldiers engaged in the early phases of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and preparing to deploy in support of later phases of those operations, it is no surprise that the after-action review (AAR) process has become increasingly important. Unarguably, the challenges military police Soldiers faced in the early phases of OIF are vastly different from those facing our forces on the ground today. Soldiers returning to fight in later phases of the operation realize they are fighting insurgents who are using completely different tactics. As a result, there has been a distinct evolution in how units are getting their AAR comments back to their leaders.

Although it is fair to say that Soldiers have always understood the importance of conducting AARs, often that post-exercise chore was something to be endured or postponed because it was considered painful and tedious. However, as the Global War on Terrorism has progressed, units are becoming more and more eager to share their lessons learned, although the Marines may be more accurate with their description in calling them “lessons identified.”

Regardless of how they are labeled, these lessons are filtering back to the Regiment on a daily basis. Senior leaders and small group leaders are clamoring for the opportunity to speak to returning Soldiers and change their programs of instruction for current students to match the new tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) they are receiving, almost always

faster than doctrine can keep up with. There are several recent examples of units returning to the US Army Military Police School (USAMPS) at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, to brief students and leaders. In April, most of the senior leaders from the 89th Military Police Brigade’s deployment spent four days here conducting an internal AAR, packaging their work into a digital library, and hosting a seminar for more than 200 Military Police Officer Basic Course (MPOBC), Military Police Captains Career Course (MPCCC), and Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) Academy students. The leaders answered questions about the work they had just completed in Iraq. Audience members who had been in Iraq just one year before the brigade found they had experiences there that were vastly different. Many students, knowing they would be going to Iraq soon after graduating, said that they appreciated the opportunity to listen to the hard-earned lessons of the returning Soldiers.

Shortly after the 89th departed, the 16th Military Police Brigade sent a team of approximately six leaders to meet with the small group instructors and leaders of the Directorate of Training and Leader Development (DTLD) to pass along AAR comments from OIF. Again, the insights the 16th brought back were different from those of the 89th. Although the two brigades were in Iraq at the same time, their different locations gave their Soldiers different combat experiences, thereby providing an additional set of AAR comments for DTLD to incorporate into its training programs.

---

*...as the Global War on Terrorism has progressed, units are becoming more and more eager to share their lessons learned, although the Marines may be more accurate with their description in calling them “lessons identified.”*

*Although modern communications are useful for creating real-world scenarios with minimal lag time for students, the learning experience gained from a chance to “pick the brains” of returning Soldiers face-to-face is unmatched in quality.*

---

Although modern communications are useful for creating real-world scenarios with minimal lag time for students, the learning experience gained from a chance to “pick the brains” of returning Soldiers face-to-face is unmatched in quality. There is no substitution for discussing the critical moments of a scenario with someone who has firsthand experience. At no time was this more apparent than when a squad from the 617th Military Police Company, Kentucky Army National Guard, took a week’s break from their deployment to return to USAMPS. Staff Sergeant Timothy Nein and his squad spent 11 days briefing the Military Police Corps’ senior leaders; training, combat, and doctrine developers; students from MPOBC, MPCCC, basic and advanced NCO courses, and one-station unit training companies on the March ambush that has made the 617th well known around the Corps. To that end, one of the company’s NCOs, Sergeant LeAnn Hester, is the first woman to be awarded the Silver Star since World War II.

They provided a layout, pictures, and a phase-by-phase description of the ambush and their reactions that were both frightening and enlightening. Their presentation further reinforced what our Soldiers already know (but occasionally become desensitized to)—that not only are our

enemies vicious and merciless, but they are also smart and evolving. Further, they are studying us as much as we are studying them and changing their TTP as fast as we are adjusting ours. As a result, the biggest lesson reinforced by the Soldiers’ visits was that we need to continue to pay attention to the daily changes on the battlefield. The best way to do that is through the people on the ground. Returning units emphasized that flexibility and adaptability, combined with strict discipline, are the most important traits our Soldiers can have.

The shared experiences of the 89th and 16th Military Police Brigades have helped further shape the doctrine of USAMPS and the 14th Military Police Brigade. Unfortunately, because of publication schedules and the fluidity of the battlefield, it is next to impossible to keep the published doctrine fully accurate and timely. However, if we can continue to foster an environment among our leaders and Soldiers that encourages them to share their experiences in the appropriate forum and with the appropriate personnel (in other words, not posting TTP on the nonsecure Internet protocol router net for mass distribution), we will be able to provide the best training available. And that is worth a dozen trips back to Fort Leonard Wood.